
CANCER FACTS

National Cancer Institute • National Institutes of Health
Department of Health and Human Services

Quitting Tobacco: Handling Depression ... Without Smoking

What To Expect

- It is normal to feel sad for a period of time after you first quit smoking. Many people have a strong urge to smoke when they feel depressed.
- If you give in to your craving for a cigarette, you may feel sad that you could not stick with your decision to quit.

Did You Know?

- Having a history of depression is associated with more severe withdrawal symptoms—including more severe depression. Some studies have found that many people with a history of major depression will have a new major depressive episode after quitting. However, in those with no history of depression, major depression after quitting is rare.
- If mild depression occurs, it will usually begin within the first day, continue for the first couple of weeks, and go away within a month.

What To Do

- Identify your specific feelings at the time that you seem depressed. Are you actually feeling tired, lonely, bored, or hungry? Focus on and address these specific needs.
- Add up how much money you have saved already by not purchasing cigarettes and imagine (in detail) how you will spend your savings in 6 months.
- Call a friend and plan to have lunch, or go to a movie, a concert, or another pleasurable event.
- Make a list of things that are upsetting to you and write down solutions for them.
- Keep positive about changes in life.
- Increase physical activity. This will help to improve your mood and lift your depression.
- Focus on your strengths.
- Plan your next vacation or fun activity.
- Breathe deeply.
- Establish a list of your short- and long-term personal goals.



- Think of how healthy you will be when all smoking effects are gone from your body and you can call yourself smoke-free.
- If depression continues for more than 1 month, see your doctor.

Nicotine and Your Body and Mind

- Nicotine is a highly addictive drug. It acts as both a stimulant and a depressant, depending upon your mood and the time of day. It controls your mood by regulating the level of activity of key parts of the brain and central nervous system that control your sense of well-being.

Related Notes

- Everyone is different. The way that you will cope with the problems of quitting may be the opposite of what worked for your spouse, significant other, or best friend.
- Ask your doctor about prescription medications that may help you with depression.
- Learn about the signs of depression and where to go for help at the National Institute of Mental Health Web site (<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>).

How To Get Help

- If you or someone you know wants help with giving up tobacco, please call the National Cancer Institute's Smoking Quitline toll-free at 1-877-44U-QUIT (1-877-448-7848). The information specialists on the Quitline can provide suggestions and support to help smokers break the habit.
- The Federal Government's Smokefree.gov Web site (<http://www.smokefree.gov>) allows you to choose the help that best fits your needs. You can get immediate assistance:
 - View an online step-by-step cessation guide.
 - Find state quitline telephone numbers.
 - Instant message an expert through NCI's *LiveHelp* service.
 - Download, print, or order publications about quitting smoking.

<p>This fact sheet was adapted from material developed by the Tobacco Education and Prevention Program of the Arizona Department of Health Services and the Arizona Smokers' Helpline of the University of Arizona.</p>

###

This fact sheet was reviewed on 11/08/04